

LENTEN DRESSSHOWS

New Fashions Exhibited at Many Openings.

A GREAT SEASON FOR LACE

Four or Five Kinds Often Found on a French Model.

Dressmakers as well as customers flocking to the exhibitions of Spring Gowns—Enormous Numbers of High Priced Frocks Sold—Superb Showing of the Laces—The Creamy or Yellowed Tone of Age Preferred to Plain White—The Coats Fascinating This Spring—Ballet Effects—Smart Afternoon Frocks

The opening is always a popular form of Lenten diversion, and women have been going to openings during the last two weeks. Some of them were exclusive affairs for a select clientele and entrance was a privilege hard to obtain. But after all many of the so-called exclusive models were to be seen in other establishments and even in the wholesale importing houses, where so many merchants and dressmakers buy the models they "picked up in Paris," so one could study customers and salesfolk as well as frocks.

It is a comedy, this business of catering to the feminine love of fine feathers, a comedy vastly amusing where it does not take on too keen an edge of satire, and it seems a pity that the real story of the modern dressmaking business cannot be written. It would be illuminative and extraordinarily entertaining, but the theme has so many variations and is so involved that it would be difficult to do it justice, and the various actors in the comedy could hardly be expected to be frank with the student of their little ways.

The dressmakers' openings are quite



BLACK CHARMUSE.

as entertaining as the select clientele affairs, rather more so in some respects, for these dressmakers who swarm to New York from all corners of the country, and the lesser New York dressmakers, who do not study the modes in Paris and who pick up their ideas where they can, offer an enormous collection of types. One can check them off as one watches them and listens to them and as one notes the degree of enthusiasm with which they are welcomed by the men and women in charge of the exhibit.

There is the successful dressmaker from the large Western city or town, handsomely gowned, shrewd, self-assured, exuding prosperity, taking offensive greetings as her right. There is the provincial dressmaker from the small town with the near modish costume and the important air. There is the little dressmaker from uptown, torn between admiration and discouragement before models whose seemingly simple effects are achieved in masterly ways. Oh, yes, there are all kinds at the dressmakers' openings, and as for the general openings, those at which everybody is made welcome, there's no place like



BLUE SERGE.

them for the studying of feminine types and follies.

And then there are frocks, frocks for all sorts and conditions of women save the poor, for at the important dressmaking openings it is usually the better imported model that is displayed, and its price puts a damper upon the enthusiasm of the average woman.

Yet enormous quantities of these high priced models and of others as costly, but not exhibited at the openings, are sold here in New York. If one could obtain the exact figures they would be staggering, even to the folk who under-

stand and deplore the extravagance of American women. Frocks at from \$200 to \$500 sell by thousands and tens of thousands, and prices soaring even higher are common.

This season the vogue of beautiful laces helps to boost the prices of many imported frocks, and truly lovely models are shown which are fashioned chiefly of rare laces and are consequently of extravagant cost. The sales folk save the customers' consciences by pointing out the fact that good lace is always a valuable possession which may be used again and again, but even admitting

lace, through which the outline of the clinging frock shows vaguely.

Coats of the same general character in embroidered chiffon or tulle are numerous and are, like the lace coats, often an integral part of a costume, being worn rather as a tunic than as a coat over a simple short waisted frock of beautiful lines.

The coats, of one kind and another, are really fascinating this spring. They run the gamut from the shortest and most whimsical of boleros to the full length redingote and there is extraordinary variety in their lines.

smartness it will impart to a frock otherwise cheap or simple.

"I paid \$25 for my embroidered collar and cuff set," said a woman the other day, "but I would have paid at least \$75 for a new frock that would have looked as well as this one does now that I have added the collar and cuffs; and then the collar and cuffs will be beautiful on other things if I want to use them. I call that economy."

And it was economy. The woman who has the courage to plunge on toilet accessories and do her economizing on the main body of her frocks and suits often

white charmeuse with girdle of blue satin held by a little cluster of velvet cherries is a model that caught Parisian fancy when worn by a popular actress in one of the new plays, and is susceptible of copying in various materials. It is a charming model for a slender figure and particularly suited to a youthful wearer.

Indeed a very large percentage of the chic models have an air distinctly youthful, an air due largely to the low necks and collars; but it is reassuring to a woman of mature years to find that there are plenty of models from the best houses

tative source, so one has proper backing if one wishes a guimpe stouter than those of filmy net or chiffon or lace.

A guimpe of plain sheer chiffon with a line or two of colored stitching holding the narrow hem at the high, close collar top, and perhaps repeated around the bottom of the collar, is used for some pretty French models in voile, chiffon, foulard, &c.

The short bolero with draped fronts crossed in fichu fashion drawn around the waist to the back and falling in sash ends is a pretty model for use separately with light summer frocks, though in the original model it belonged with a striped mousseline de soie frock in violet and white, while the coat was of violet silk with touches of corse embroidery.

And apropos of this bolero there is recalled a smart serge coat whose big soft collar of silk was crossed in the same fichu fashion in front and continued in scarf ends, passing through two big eyelet slits at each side so that it disap-

with accompanying redingotes of satin or other silk almost entirely covering the frocks are among the picturesque new models and some of the redingotes are sleeveless, allowing the frock sleeves of chiffon to show. A Margaine la Croix model of this sort showed a short frock of black chiffon braided in narrow black silk braid and with a collarless yoke and long sleeves of black chiffon over vivid green chiffon. A long redingote of black satin, short of waist but without belt or girdle, reached quite to the bottom of the frock at back and sides but sloped



LINGERIE AND VELVET.

away enough in the front to show a little of the braided chiffon skirt.

The coat had big Directoire ravers of green and black and was sleeveless, though the collar fell low over the top of the frock sleeves, which were long and loose, showing the arm vaguely through the double thickness of chiffon black over green.

There is much of the narrow silk braiding on chiffon, mousseline de soie and other sheer materials, and usually small buttons are used for trimming with the braid.

Some of the smartest afternoon frocks seen have been in chiffon of dark color with this braid and button trimming and some relieving arrangement of yellowed lace or embroidery muslin on the upper part of the corsage. A Worth model of great quiet distinction was in a chiffon of deepest purple, almost black. Perhaps raisin is the name for it.

The full skirt was weighted down by many rows of self color half inch silk braid applied in panels, with little buttons finishing the ends, and there was some of the same trimming on the girdle and bodice. The sleeves of chiffon were very long, loose, though shaping to conform loosely to the arm line below the elbow, and rather close at the wrist, with a flat full falling low over the back of the hand. This sleeve was trimmed slightly in velvet to the arm line below the elbow, over an elbow length, straight peasant sleeves of fine creamy lace. A broad, softly pleated jabot arrangement of the lace almost covered the front of the bodice.



DARK BLUE AND RED.

skirt drapery, many of the loveliest models in very soft materials having intricate and graceful skirt drapery instead of the straight Empire lines or the straight simple tunic or belted lines which have been so generally exploited during the winter. There are still plenty of the latter, though the fether or hobble idea in its entirety has passed, but the most beautiful of the skirt models are the draped ones. Naturally the worst failures too are in this field, for there is no other thing in dressmaking which so positively demands artistic inspiration as does drapery, and no bungling hand can triumph in this regard.

The plain clinging skirt, opened at sides or front to show a petticoat or pantaloon, is still much used, and the model in black charmeuse which is pictured in one of the cuts is a distinguished example of the type in serviceable, conservative form. The corsage is of black mousseline de soie embroidered in black and laid over flesh color chiffon, and the soft, full petticoat of which one gets a glimpse is of the same semi-transparent black over flesh color. Guimpe, revers and cuffs are of white mousseline de soie.

Frocks of chiffon or mousseline de soie

PLAIN AND STRIPED SILK.



A LONG LACE COAT EMBROIDERED WITH ROSE; A FROCK OF ECRU BATISTE WITH SOUTACHE PRINTED COTTON, AND A FROCK OF WHITE CHARMUSE WITH A JACKET OF ENGLISH EMBROIDERY.

the truth of this proposition the initial expense is calculated to give pause to any but the hardiest ambition.

Not in many years have good laces been used as freely as they are this season and never within memory have the lace departments made so superb a showing of real laces, old and new, and of fine imitations. The filet meshes are particularly popular, and stunning designs are offered in the hand darned filets, some of them priced at figures prohibitive for the average shopper, but others less elaborate, quite moderate in price as hand wrought laces go.

Venetian is as much a favorite as ever and so is Irish, while Mechlin, Alençon, Chantilly and all the fine laces are equally popular for their appropriate purposes. A creamy or yellowed tone suggesting the mellow tint of the old laces is preferred even in the new lace and one sees much less of the pure white Irish and other white laces than usual.

The same is true of the batiste and linen embroideries, and the softened tone is infinitely more becoming than the white. It harmonizes more delightfully with everything save pure white lingerie materials, and since the big lace collars, fichus, &c., which are prominent this season, are to be used on all kinds of material, the yellowed lace is eminently desirable.

It is a common thing to find four or five kinds of lace introduced upon one of the French models and admirable results are secured in this way, while the combination of a very bold, heavy lace, such as filet, Venetian or Irish, with a fine lace is almost inevitable whenever lace enters largely into a frock or coat.

Beautiful unlined coats of lace, long, clinging and exceedingly graceful of line, are shown by almost every importer and in many the Empire idea is recognized by some short bolero-like or deep yoke effect worked out in heavy lace, while the soft lengths below are of fine

They are fashioned of all sorts of materials and worn for all sorts of occasions, and, by the way, it is already possible to secure patterns for some delightful phases of the little short coat, and if one will go to the expense of having one of these patterns cut to measure in crinoline any clever seamstress ought to be able to follow it successfully. Where a longer and strictly tailored coat is in question the problem is more difficult, but many of the odd little Empire coatees and boleros are more a matter of originality than of workmanship, and, given a good pattern, it ought to be easy to work out one of the piquant little silk coats for wear with sheer summer frocks or to freshen a frock whose bodice is worn out of fashion.

The fichu and the big collar also furnish valuable first aid to frocks out of date, and while the prices asked for the finer and smarter things of this kind in the shops may seem high at first thought, the investment if not too heavy may be quite justified by the modish transformation it will effect in a frock or the element of

secures an extremely modish effect where the woman who puts all her money into frocks fails.

Going back for a moment to that matter of the fanciful coat, there are on this page sketches of several attractive versions of the little coat. The coat of broderie anglaise embroidered in old blue on white and worn over a short frock of

showing a guimpe and high collar and developed along lines that are chic without being definitely committed to youthfulness.

The guimpe of plain chiffon in white or flesh color is frequently used and the plain fine net or fine fancy net is liked. Occasionally one sees a heavy lace guimpe in a model emanating from an authori-

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